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*Property Dualism and the  
Merits of Solutions to the  
Mind-Body Problem*

*A Reply to Strawson*

**1. Introduction**

This paper is divided into two main sections. The first articulates what I believe Strawson's position to be. I first contrast Strawson's usage of 'physicalism' with the mainstream use. I then explain why I think that Strawson's position is one of property dualism and substance monism. In doing this, I outline his view and Locke's view on the nature of substance. I argue that they are similar in many respects and thus it is no surprise that Strawson actually holds a view on the mind much like one plausible interpretation of Locke's position. Strawson's use of terminology cloaks this fact and he does not himself explicitly recognize it in his paper. In the second section, I outline some of Strawson's assumptions that he uses in arguing for his position. I comment on the plausibility of his position concerning the relation of the mind to the body compared with mainstream physicalism and various forms of dualism. Before embarking on the two main sections, in the remainder of this introduction, I very briefly sketch Strawson's view.

Strawson claims that he is a physicalist and panpsychist. These two views are not obvious bedfellows, indeed, as typically conceived, they are incompatible positions. However, Strawson's use of the term 'physicalism' is not the mainstream one. Strawson, clearly, recognizes this and takes some pains to distinguish how the way in which he conceives of physicalism is different from mainstream physicalism. Strawsonian physicalism is the position that there are both non-abstract 'experiential' phenomena (by this Strawson means conscious

mental phenomena, including both experience, traditionally conceived, and conscious thought) and non-experiential phenomena and that, ‘there is, in some fundamental sense, only one kind of stuff in the universe’ (Strawson, 2006, p. 4).<sup>1</sup> He thinks that the experiential cannot be explained in principle by the non-experiential. The former does not reduce to the latter, and it does not emerge from the latter in any explicable way (p. 8). Strawson urges a panpsychist view, which he claims to be the view that ‘all physical ultimates are experiential’ (p. 19).

## 2. What Strawson’s Position Really Is

### 2.1 *Strawsonian Physicalism and Mainstream Physicalism*

Strawsonian physicalism is the claim that all real concrete phenomena in our universe are physical. (Concrete phenomena are contrasted with abstract ones such as numbers and concepts.) Further, Strawsonian ‘real physicalism’ is the view that, in addition to the previous claim, conscious experience and conscious thought are concrete existents that require an explanation.<sup>2</sup> This is because, according to Strawson, the existence of consciousness ‘is more certain than the existence of anything else’ (Strawson, 2006, p. 1). Thus, Strawson wishes to defend a position that, in his terminology, would be stated as ‘experiential phenomena are physical’.<sup>3</sup>

In the conventional usage, ‘physicalism’ is taken to be a position that embraces Strawson’s claim that all real concrete phenomena in our universe are physical. However, a definition is usually given of what ‘physical’ means that is at odds with Strawson. Crane and Mellor tell us that in the eighteenth century the physical was defined a priori, requiring it to be ‘solid, inert, impenetrable and conserved, and to interact deterministically and only on contact’ (Crane and Mellor, 1990, p. 186). However, the posits of modern physics have few of these properties, yet are still taken to be clearly and paradigmatically physical. Thus, mainstream physicalists today usually define ‘physical’ as that posited by fundamental science.

However, this latter notion needs to be made more precise. What exactly is ‘fundamental science’? Fundamental science would describe the basic particles and forces and the laws governing them. What

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- [1] I will stick to using Strawson’s terms ‘experience’ and ‘experiential’ for any conscious mental phenomena — both conscious thought and conscious sensory states.
- [2] From now on, when I talk about something’s existing, I will mean concretely existing, unless I explicitly specify otherwise.
- [3] I will follow Strawson’s usage in this paper and use ‘experiential’ to refer to any conscious phenomena.

would make such things basic is that all other phenomena can be reduced to them. That is, all other phenomena can be explained and predicted, with no remainder, by fundamental science, perhaps together with suitable bridge laws (laws that specify the relations between the fundamental and non-fundamental phenomena).<sup>4,5</sup>

Can we be more precise still? One answer that could be given is that present day physics is the fundamental science that explains everything. However, this answer is very likely false. The physics of today is not complete. It probably does not list all the basic particles, forces and laws which together can explain everything else. Thus, we should expect fundamental science in the future to alter from its present state. Therefore, a seemingly better answer that could be given to the question of what is physical is that it is the posits of true and complete fundamental science.

However, here a large problem looms. If the answer were simply left at that then mainstream physicalism would have become a vacuous doctrine. It would state that what exists is the physical and the physical is that which is needed to explain everything that exists. There would be no limit as to what sort of thing can count as physical. To see this, one need simply note that if completed and true fundamental science had to posit a fundamental experiential force or particle then the physicalist position under consideration would have to say that that experiential particle or force was physical. Mainstream physicalists wish to resist this trivialization of 'physicalism' and deny that among the posits of true and complete fundamental science will be experiential particles or forces or the like. (Similarly, people who wish to be mainstream physicalists concerning morality, aesthetics or some other area, would hold that moral entities, or aesthetic entities, or entities in that other area, will not be among the posits of completed and

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[4] Of course there is a large dispute today about whether everything can be reduced to physics, or to physics plus other sciences, and whether there will be a 'unity of science'. It is not my intention to suggest here that there must be such a reduction or such a unity. I simply wish to convey that a completed science must explain everything, and thus must posit what is needed to do so.

[5] What I have outlined here is reductive physicalism. Those who believe in non-reductive physicalism hold that there can be a looser relation than reduction between the posits of fundamental science and higher-level phenomena that, nonetheless, still warrants holding the higher-level phenomena to be physical. Instead of there being bridge laws that show higher-level phenomena to be identical with their lower-level counterparts (as is the case in reduction), it is held that the lower-level phenomena merely constitute the higher-level phenomena. That is to say, a weaker relation than identity, such as supervenience, is taken to hold between the different levels, and the obtaining of this relation establishes that the higher-level is physical. Whether or not mainstream physicalists can be non-reductivists is the subject of much debate in the literature.

true fundamental science.) This point is well-made by Crane and Mellor, and Papineau, who write:

One may debate the exact boundary of physical science: but unless some human sciences, of which psychology will be our exemplar, lie beyond its pale, physicalism, as a doctrine about the mind will be vacuous.<sup>6</sup>

. . . it is not crucial that you know exactly what a complete physics would include. Much more important is to know what it will not include. Suppose, for example, that you have an initial idea of what you mean by ‘mental’ (the sentient, say, or the intentional, or perhaps just whatever events occur specifically in the heads of intelligent beings). And suppose now that you understand ‘physical’ as simply meaning ‘non-mental’, that is, as standing for those properties which can be identified without using this specifically mental terminology. Then, provided we can be confident that the ‘physical’ in this sense is complete, that is, that every non-mental effect is fully determined by *non-mental* antecedents, then we can conclude that all mental states must be identical with something non-mental (otherwise mental states couldn’t have non-mental effects). This understanding of ‘physical’ as ‘non-mental’ might seem a lot weaker than most pre-theoretical understandings, but note that it is just what we need for philosophical purposes, since it still generates the worthwhile conclusion that the mental must be identical with the non-mental; given, that is, that we are entitled to assume that the non-mental is complete.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, mainstream physicalists hold that, applied to the posits of completed and true fundamental science, ‘mental’ and ‘physical’ are incompatible or opposing terms. However, this does not stop the main claim of mainstream physicalists about the mind being that the experiential, or the mental more generally, is the physical; by this they mean that the mental is a higher-level phenomenon that can be explained in a reductive (or non-reductive<sup>8</sup>) way by non-mental, physical fundamental entities. (Note that eliminativists have a mainstream physicalist ontology, however, rather than being physicalists about the mind, they think that it does not exist because it cannot be explained by non-mental, physical fundamental entities.)

The above is well established in the literature and I don’t take it that I am saying anything that will be new to Strawson. He is careful to

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- [6] Crane and Mellor (1990), p. 186. They argue that the debate about the nature of the mind should not be conducted in terms of whether it is physical or due to the kind of problems that I indicate here, which they go into in greater detail.
- [7] Papineau (2000), pp. 183–4. The emphasis is his. He, unlike Crane and Mellor, is a proponent of mainstream physicalism. However, that people with different views agree on how mainstream physicalism has to be construed is instructive.
- [8] See footnote 3.

distinguish his physicalism from the mainstream variety, or at least something like it. However, explicating mainstream physicalism in this way allows me to highlight certain features of Strawson's physicalism. Recall that Strawson's physicalism was the claim that all real concrete phenomena in our universe are physical. One can now see that, as Strawson does not go on to say what 'physical' means, it may look as if Strawson's physicalism is open to just the same charge of vacuousness that is outlined above.

Is Strawson's physicalism vacuous? To see the answer, note that Strawson claims that he does not define the physical as being 'concrete-reality-what-ever-it-is' (Strawson, 2006, p. 5). If he did that then he would be open to a blatant charge of vacuousness. Rather, he holds that 'physical stuff' is a natural kind term whose reference is fixed as being that kind of 'stuff' that comprises the concrete phenomena that we actually find in our world. This move has three consequences of note. First, Strawson is just assuming that there is one type of 'stuff'. Thus, he is simply assuming monism. Strawson does not present an argument that there are not two (or more) distinctive natural kinds of 'stuff'. Thus he has not provided us with an argument for dismissing dualism about 'stuff'. For all that has been said, dualism could be true. (I will come back to this point later in this paper.) Second, it renders Strawson's physicalism a little less trivial than we might have thought because he is explicitly stating that the 'stuff' is of one (natural) kind. It is not that there are many kinds of 'stuff' each of which deserves the epithet 'physical'. However, third, the claim that this one kind of 'stuff' is physical does look to be a vacuous one. However, Strawson himself in various passages admits this, stating that he would be happy to concede that his view is just a monist view, so long that it is understood that this one 'stuff' can be both physical (in the mainstream use of the term which excludes the experiential) and experiential (which, recall, in Strawson's terminology, refers to all conscious mental phenomena).

## *2.2 The Metaphysics of Locke and Strawson and their Commitment to Substance Monism*

Suppose we adopt neutral terminology (neutral between the mainstream view of physicalism and Strawson's view of physicalism) and say that Strawson is clearly making the claim that he is a monist. I now wish to assess whether the view Strawson opines really is monist. I will do so by considering, first, the question of whether Strawson is a monist about substance and, second, the question whether he is a

monist about properties.<sup>9</sup> After establishing what Strawson's position really is I will go on, in section three, to comment on the nature of the arguments that he gives for it and the plausibility of his position.

In the paragraph above, I used the term 'stuff' to explicate Strawson's monism, which is the term that Strawson himself uses. On one conception of substance, substances are just kinds of stuff.<sup>10</sup> Thus, it might be reasonable to think that Strawson is at least being a monist about substance. However, investigation of these matters thoroughly leads us deep into metaphysical territory, only hinted at in Strawson's paper. On page four, in referring to the possibility that a concrete thing 'involves experiential being, even if it also involves non-experiential being', we are directed to Locke's views on substance to understand how this could be so.<sup>11</sup> Later in the paper, on page twenty-one, amongst cryptic remarks concerning how one might flesh-out Strawson's view, we are referred to Strawson's views on the nature of substance and properties outlined in another paper (namely, Strawson, 2003). So what are these views and how do they help us address the question of whether Strawson is a substance monist?

Locke held that we have an idea of 'substance in general' and an idea of 'particular sorts of substance' (Locke, II, xxiii, 2 and II, xxiii, 3). Our idea of a substance in general is the idea of something that exists to support properties, which, he says, we cannot imagine existing on their own. It is unclear whether Locke thinks that there is substance in general, or whether he thinks that we merely have such an idea but that the idea is confused.<sup>12</sup> It seems certainly true that Locke thinks that if substance exists then we can know very little about it — perhaps only that it is that in which properties inhere. The general idea here is that if substance is the thing in which properties inhere then substance itself must be property-less. If that is the case then there

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- [9] If one is a dualist about substance then one will be a dualist about properties. Each different substance will have fundamentally different types of properties. However, if one is a monist substance, then one can either be monistic about properties or one can be dualist about properties.
- [10] See Robinson (2004). The 'stuff' conception of substance is contrasted with the 'thing' conception. To illustrate: Descartes, a dualist, thought that all physical matter was part of the one physical substance and so thought of it as a stuff. At the same time, he thought each person was a different mental substance, which conforms more with the thing idea of substance.
- [11] We are referred to Locke (1690). All references to Locke in the rest of this paper will be to this work and will take the usual form, so that 'III, iii, 3' should be read as 'Part Three, Chapter Three, Section Three'.
- [12] There is debate in the secondary literature about which view is right and some people simply acknowledge the unclarity, see Robinson (2004).

would be little to know of its nature. This problem is at least part of why Locke at least thinks the idea of substance dubious.

Given Locke's views on substance in general it is no surprise that he goes on to say what he does about particular sorts of substance. He says that we have the idea of physical substance as being that in which the properties that affect our senses inhere — ideas of these properties are got from 'without'. We also have ideas of properties got from 'within' — ideas concerning the workings of the mind, particularly thought. We tend to think that conscious mental properties could not belong to physical substance so we posit a mental substance in which those properties inhere.<sup>13</sup> From these and other remarks of Locke's, it is sometimes taken that Locke is a substance dualist concerning the mind-body relation (see Aaron, 1955, p. 143; and Woolhouse, 1983, p. 180). However, based on what he goes on to say about these notions, it is far from obvious that he is.<sup>14</sup> Locke holds that a substance with physical properties alone could not produce thought:

yet matter, incogitative matter and motion, whatever changes it might produce of figure and bulk, could never produce thought (Locke, V, x, 10).

Yet he claims that God could add to physical substance, which has physical properties, mental properties:

I see no contradiction in it, that the first Eternal thinking Being, or Omnipotent Spirit, should, if he pleased, give to certain systems of created senseless matter, put together as he thinks fit, some degrees of sense, perception, and thought.<sup>15</sup>

This shows that Locke is agnostic about whether there are two distinctive substances underlying the mind-body relationship — the physical and mental — or whether there is one substance that can have both mental and physical attributes. He thinks that there are no good grounds on which to choose between these two positions.<sup>16</sup> However, what he does seem to hold is that *if* there is only one substance then it has *distinctive* mental and physical properties. The physical properties that inhere in a substance cannot produce the mental ones. God has to

[13] Locke, II, xxxiii, 5. Note that Locke's understanding of 'physical' is unlike that of Strawson. As will become clearer below, it corresponds more closely to Strawson's 'non-experiential'.

[14] See Bermúdez (1996). He argues, contra Ayers (1991), p. 44, that Locke was not clearly a substance dualist about the (human) mind-body relation. (He notes that it is clear that Locke thought that God was an immaterial substance.)

[15] Locke, V, iii, 6. Other passages in this section indicate the same.

[16] He does, however, think that the substance dualist account is slightly more plausible. See IV, iii, 6.



add mental properties to a substance that has physical properties in order for it to have mental attributes. This view, in standard terminology, is one of substance monism, together with property dualism. The mental cannot be explained in terms of the physical because the two are of fundamentally different kinds.

In summary, Locke is rather circumspect about substance. Either he thinks that it does not exist or he thinks that our idea of it is confused or at the very least exceedingly limited. To the extent that he endorses the notion, Locke is agnostic between substance dualism and substance monism about the mind-body relation. According to Locke, if substance dualism is true then there is a distinctive mental substance that has only mental properties and a distinctive physical substance that has only physical properties. If substance monism is true then, according to Locke, any mental attributes that such a substance has will be had in virtue of its having distinctive mental properties — distinct from any physical properties that it may have. This is because he thinks no combination of physical properties can produce mentality.

How does this relate to Strawson's views? When we look to Strawson (2003), which we are instructed to do on page 21 of the target paper, we find that Strawson, even more than Locke, is explicitly sceptical about the notion of substance:

‘Bare particulars’ — objects thought of as things that do of course *have* properties but are *in themselves* entirely independent of properties — are incoherent. To be is necessarily to be somehow or other . . . The claim is not that there can be concrete instantiations of properties without concrete objects. It is that objects (just) are collections of concretely instantiated properties . . . When Kant says that ‘in their relation to substance, accidents [or properties] are not really subordinated to it, but are the mode of existing of the substance itself’ I think that he gets the matter exactly right . . . the distinction between the actual being of a thing or object or particular, considered at any given time, and its actual properties, at that time, is merely a conceptual distinction (like the distinction between triangularity and trilaterality) rather than a real (ontological) distinction.<sup>17</sup>

This shows us that, for Strawson, there are, ontologically, only collections of properties. There is no independently existing substance. Strawson is either sceptical or deflationist about substance. On the one hand, taking a sceptical reading of the above, one might be tempted to say that he is neither a dualist nor a monist about substance as he thinks there really is no substance. On the other hand, a

[17] Strawson (2003), pp. 299–300. Everything in brackets is in the original passage. The quotation within the paragraph is from Kant (1781–7/1889) A414/B441.

deflationary reading seems more appropriate as he does not seem to deny that there is substance (conceived of only as the right kind of collections of properties) and in the target paper, Strawson (2006), insists on the claim that there is only one type of ‘stuff’. This latter claim about the number of types of ‘stuff’ appears to show that Strawson is professing to be a substance monist. This claim to monism would be backed up if Strawson was a monist about properties. If all the properties are of the one type then collections of such properties will be of the one type also. But what if Strawson turns out to be a dualist about properties, as I will argue is the case below? In that case, so long as there is no bar to any object or substance coming to have any type of property then all objects or substances are of the same type — the type in which any sort of property can inhere. It would only be reasonable to posit substance dualism on this reading of Strawson if he also held that properties of different types could not form collections of a sort that constitute substances, but there is every reason to think that this is precisely not what Strawson’s view is, as his claim to panpsychism attests.<sup>18</sup> Thus, regardless of whether Strawson turns out to be a property monist or a property dualist, the best interpretation of his position is that he is a substance monist, but that claim should be taken as follows: substances, or objects, simply are the right kind of collections of properties and such collections can consist of both experiential and non-experiential properties.<sup>19</sup>

To sum up this section, either Strawson should be thought of as thinking that there is no substance, or, more plausibly I think, he should be seen as deflationist about substance. If the latter is accepted then Strawson’s position is clearly a substance monist view. As I have said before, I will address his arguments for this view and the plausibility of this position in Section 3. Before doing so, I turn now to the question of whether Strawson’s position is a property monist position.

### 2.3 *Property Dualism*

There are two sorts of property dualist. One sort is compatible with substance dualism. On this view, the two different types of properties cannot exist in the same type of substance, or cannot exist in collections of the right kind that constitute a substance. (Exactly how one will put

[18] Further elucidation of this point occurs at the beginning of the next section.

[19] Strawson goes on to argue, in the second half of his paper, for panpsychism — which would suggest that he thinks that the right kind of collections will always involve experiential properties. Note that it is unclear whether Strawson would countenance objects that had only experiential properties. While I think he might not, I can’t see anything in Strawson (2006) that rules it out.

this claim will depend on whether one holds a deflationary view of substance or not.) The other sort is compatible with substance monism. On this view, the two different sorts of properties can exist in the same type of substance or can exist in collections of the right kind that constitute a substance. If, despite the fact he does not claim to be one, Strawson was to turn out to be a property dualist, he would clearly be a property dualist of the latter kind.<sup>20,21</sup>

Recall that I concluded that Strawson is a substance monist. If someone is a substance monist how do you decide whether they are a property monist or dualist? What exactly is a property dualist? Rosenthal says:

human beings are physical substances but have mental properties, and those properties are not physical. This view is known as property dualism, or the dual-aspect theory.<sup>22</sup>

We know that Strawson would not agree to the idea that humans are physical substances, when ‘physical’ is used in the mainstream way to exclude the mental. However, I think that it is in the spirit of Rosenthal’s definition that a view would still be clearly property dualist if it claimed that human beings are composed of one type of substance but have conscious mental properties that are not mainstream physical properties (as well as mainstream physical properties). Given this definition, Strawson is a property dualist. He holds that experiential properties (conscious, mental properties) are not mainstream physical properties. This simply is property dualism in mainstream terminology.

In addition, when we look to other slightly different definitions of property dualism, we see that one can take Strawson’s arguments from the core of his paper, which argue for the conclusion that the non-experiential cannot in principle explain the experiential, as being vehement arguments for property dualism. To see this, recall that Locke held that mental properties could not be explained by physical

[20] Philosophical terminology here is slippery. Occasionally property dualism is taken to be only the latter view: substance monism and property dualism. However, I will not adhere to this usage.

[21] Strawson makes the remark that ‘one needs to grasp fully the point that “property dualism”, applied to intrinsic, non-relational properties, is strictly incoherent insofar as it purports to be genuinely distinct from substance dualism, because there is nothing more to a thing’s being than its intrinsic, non-relational properties’ (Strawson, 2006, p. 21). I have to admit that I don’t see why this is true, given that there are the two versions of property dualism that I have just outlined.

[22] Rosenthal (1998). Note that this conception of property dualism is incompatible with substance dualism. This is, I think, a mistake, as I articulated in the paragraph above. Nonetheless, Rosenthal’s definition is useful as it articulates the form that pertains to Strawson.

properties. If a physical object or substance had mental properties, then they had to be put there by God in addition to the physical ones. In standard terminology, this renders Locke a property dualist. Bermúdez, who reads Locke in this way, says:

The crucial tenet of property dualism is that in principle we will not be able to explain mental properties in terms of physical properties, or vice versa. (Bermúdez, 1996, p. 233)

He is not alone in having this conception. For example, Calef (2005) says:

Property dualists argue that mental states are irreducible attributes of brain states.

What applies to Locke here, applies to Strawson. Strawson spends the bulk of his paper defending the position that experiential properties cannot in principle be explained in terms of non-experiential properties. He thinks that the experiential cannot be reduced to the non-experiential and then argues at length that, in principle, the experiential cannot be wholly and fully explained by the non-experiential in some emergentist way.<sup>23</sup> Thus, by the lights of these central definitions of property dualism, Strawson is a property dualist, and the arguments that are at the heart of his paper are precisely arguments for that position.

Lastly, to back up this conclusion, note that Strawson's position also conforms to the following definition:

Fundamental property dualism regards conscious mental properties as basic constituents of reality on a par with fundamental physical properties such as electromagnetic charge. (Van Gulick, 2004)

Strawson clearly holds this position, as can be seen from the following quotations (remembering what his non-standard usage of 'physical' is):

Assuming, then, that there is a plurality of physical ultimates, some of them at least must be intrinsically experiential, intrinsically experience-involving. (Strawson, 2006, p. 18)

Once upon a time there was relatively unorganized matter, with both experiential and non-experiential *fundamental* features. It organized into increasingly complex forms, both experiential and non-experiential. (p. 21, the emphasis is mine)

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[23] Rather than talk of what is explicable in principle, Strawson (2006, p. 10) talks of the notion of what is intelligible or explicable to God, which is equivalent to the former and which he holds, rightly, is not an epistemological notion.

Thus, by this third definition too, Strawson is a property dualist. (Moreover, we can see from the quote above that he is genuinely dualist, as opposed to a property monist of the kind who thinks that the one kind of fundamental properties are experiential.<sup>24</sup>)

How does this charge of property dualism affect Strawson's claim that he is a panpsychist? Suppose one thought that panpsychism is the claim that all the fundamental constituents of reality are experiential. If, on the one hand, 'the fundamental constituents of reality' can refer to the fundamental properties then Strawson is not a panpsychist as, as I have been arguing, he thinks that there are both fundamental experiential and fundamental non-experiential properties. (Indeed, a person who thought that there were only fundamental experiential properties would be an idealist of some type.) If, on the other hand, 'the fundamental constituents of reality' only refers to fundamental objects, substances, or collections of properties of the right kind that comprise objects, then because Strawson holds that these things always involve at least one fundamental experiential property he can reasonably be classified as some type of panpsychist.

Before finishing this section, I wish briefly to comment on two ways Strawson might reply to this charge. First, Strawson explicitly states that he wishes to eschew, as far as possible, the subject/predicate form and the substance/property distinction. Thus he might claim that my insistence that he is a property dualist forces him to recognize the substance/property distinction that he denies. However, I spelled out in detail the position Strawson takes on this distinction. I have not ignored his position on this. He wishes to be deflationist about the notion of substance and claims that substances simply are the right kind of collections of properties. I have taken pains to show that, even understanding his metaphysics, the best and correct classification of Strawson's position is one of property dualism.

Second, because Strawson would state his own position as being one in which all the properties are Strawsonian physicalist properties, I think he might try to defend his position as being monist about properties. But recall also that Strawson's physicalism claim could be broken in two. There was the monist claim and the claim that the monism deserved the epithet 'physicalism'. However, recall that Strawson

[24] This claim is backed up further by the following quotation from Strawson (2006): 'you can't get experiential phenomena from P phenomena, i.e. shape-size-mass-charge-etc. phenomena, or, more carefully now — for we can no longer assume that P phenomena as defined really are wholly non-experiential phenomena — from *non-experiential* features of shape-size-mass-charge etc. phenomena' (p. 18). Strawson again suggests that there are both experiential and non-experiential features or properties. Thus his view is not that there are only experiential properties, which supports my charge of property dualism.

explicitly said that the monism claim was an assumption. I do not think that he is entitled to this assumption as regards properties on his view. I have been arguing that there are very good reasons to think that in fact the properties that Strawson posits are of fundamentally different types. This is because he clearly thinks that the experiential properties are not mainstream, non-experiential physical properties and are not reducible to the non-experiential ones, and that both experiential and non-experiential properties are fundamental features of the 'ultimates'. These are defining features of property dualism.

In conclusion, thus far I have attempted to spell out what Strawson's position is in standard terminology. I have outlined his usage of 'physical' and 'physicalism' and compared them to the standard. I noted Strawson's view of the nature of substance, which was seen to be rather similar to Locke's. Finally, I claimed that Strawson's position, like a view Locke finds plausible, is property dualism, combined with a deflationist monism about substance. My claim is not simply that Strawson's use of 'physicalism' is not the mainstream — a fact that Strawson acknowledges. It is that Strawsonian physicalism involves two claims: a monist claim and a claim that the monism has a right to the name 'physicalism'. I argue against the first by claiming that, concerning properties, there is good reason to think that he is in fact dualist. Because Strawson does not go into detail concerning the underlying metaphysics, the reasons to think he is really a property dualist are masked.

I noted along the way that Locke remained agnostic about whether substance dualism or substance monism was true, whereas Strawson simply assumed that substance monism was correct. In the next section of the paper, I wish to build on this last remark and comment on some of Strawson's other assumptions and his arguments and position.

### **3. Comments on Strawson's Arguments and Position**

I wish to identify some assumptions that Strawson makes in his paper. As I have already claimed, I think that Strawson assumes that there is only one type of substance. Strawson might think that he is entitled to make this assumption because he is deflationist about substance. Recall he thought that substances were just to be identified with groups of properties conjoined in some manner. However, even if one holds this view of substance, there are still two available views on how many types of substances there are. One view would be that any mixture of experiential and non-experiential properties can form the kind of collection that is an object or substance. In this case, one could

maintain that there is only one type of substance and that it can have either experiential or non-experiential properties, or both. The second view would be that there can be suitable collections of experiential properties and suitable collections of non-experiential properties, but that there cannot be suitable collections of mixed experiential and non-experiential properties. This view would amount to substance dualism. There would be some objects or substances composed solely from experiential properties and some from solely non-experiential properties, but none composed from both. Thus, even a deflationist can claim that there are distinctively experiential objects or substances and distinctively non-experiential ones. As we saw above, Locke, who tended towards similar views on the nature of substance to Strawson, was keen to leave open this possibility.

A second assumption arises after Strawson claims to have established that the experiential does not reduce to the non-experiential and that it cannot emerge from the non-experiential. Strawson goes on to try to establish 'micropsychism'. (In addition he goes on to try to establish 'panpsychism' but I will not deal with this further move here.) Micropsychism is the claim that 'some ultimates are intrinsically experience-involving'; panpsychism is the claim that they all are (Strawson, 2006, p. 19). Suppose that the former claims have been established and thus that we are agreed that there are distinctive mental and non-mental properties. How does the claim that micropsychism must be true arise? Strawson says:

So if experience like ours (or mouse experience, or sea snail experience) emerges from something that is not experience like ours (or mouse experience, or sea snail experience), then that something must already be experiential in some sense or other. (p. 18)

He concludes that some of the 'ultimates' must be experiential. But why should we suppose that our experience emerges from anything? Why not suppose that the property of having an experience, or the property of having an experience of a particular kind, is a fundamental property that can, together with other (experiential and non-experiential) properties combine to form an object or substance: a human being or a human mind or a subject of experience more generally? Why must the experiential property I have when I see something red emerge from other more fundamental experiential properties? After all, according to Strawson, the fundamental experiential properties from which my experiential properties arise are experiential properties of 'ultimates'. As Strawson himself notes, the idea that there are such properties is exceedingly problematic: this must mean that the 'ultimates' themselves

have experiences — are subjects of experience. Moreover, we have no good idea about how the experiential properties of ultimates would combine to produce the kind of experiential properties that we are ourselves familiar with. Doesn't that view posit such extremely problematic notions that we should give it up?

Strawson's answer comes only in the following passage:

Given that everything concrete is physical, *and that everything physical is constituted out of physical ultimates*, and that experience is part of concrete reality, it seems the only reasonable position (p. 19, the emphasis is mine)

There are several ways in which one could take the italicized passage. Strawson must at least intend that, together with the other claims in the sentence, it makes likely the truth of micropsychism. But taken in that way, it appears to involve much the same assumption that was present in the previous quotation, namely that the property of having an experience of such and such a type (a property that humans have) cannot be a fundamental property. It must be reducible to, or emerge (in a completely explicable way), from more basic mental properties. But it is not clear why we should accept such an assumption. Why not be a property dualist and think that one of the fundamental properties is the property of having experience of the kind with which we are familiar? One could hold that that property is not reducible to, or does not emerge from, other properties — experiential or non-experiential. One could hold that that property can attach to bundles of other properties to create creatures with experience.

Strawson might object here that such an experiential property would look as if it appeared by magic. It would look as if such a property appeared when you got the right sort of non-experiential complexity. It would look as if it emerged in a problematic sense from something non-experiential. However, I would make two points in reply. First, if the option under consideration were true then it might look to us as if such a property must be related to non-experiential properties and that it emerged from non-experiential properties. But, however it would look to us, or whatever we would be tempted to conclude if the world were that way, that would not be the truth of the matter. That is not the position being outlined. Rather, the position being outlined is that the non-experiential is not responsible for the experiential and is not something from which the experiential emerges.

My second point is the main point that I wish to make in this section. While I am sympathetic to Strawson's claims that no brand of mainstream physicalism explains the mental, it seems to me that all



versions of solutions to the mind-body problem posit rather large mysteries. Strawson does not persuade me that his version posits less of a mystery than other versions, including the alternative form of property dualism that I have just outlined.

Strawson claims that mainstream physicalism posits something mysterious: the experiential arising from the non-experiential. I think Strawson is right that no brand of mainstream physicalism has explained away this mystery with success. (Note, however, that there are many different ways in which physicalists try to do so. In addition to there being many types of emergentism that Strawson does not consider there are more straightforward types of physicalist reductionism that try to explain away the appearance of an explanatory gap by claiming that it is merely a conceptual gap. While I am not persuaded by such arguments, it would have been good if Strawson had addressed them.) Besides physicalism, there are, roughly, three brands of dualism: (i) substance and property dualism; (ii) substance monism and property dualism of a non-micropsychic kind; and (iii) substance monism and property dualism of a micropsychic kind. Each of these positions posits something unexplained. Position (i) brutally posits mental substance and properties. In its favour, it does not have to explain how the one substance can have properties of both kinds. As I have argued in Section 1 above, Strawson does nothing to show that his position (iii) is less mysterious or any more motivated than (i). (Recall too that Locke held that substance dualism was no more problematic than mere property dualism.) Position (ii) brutally posits fundamental experiential properties of the kind that humans have (macro experiential properties). It has an advantage over (i) in that it also does not posit mental substance. It has an advantage over (iii) in not positing further (micro) experiential properties, which are the properties of 'ultimates' and are not those experiential properties that we are familiar with. It has the disadvantage of not explaining why the macro experiential properties only seem to attach to non-experiential matter arranged in certain ways. As I have tried to show in this section, I believe that (ii) is no more mysterious and no less motivated than (iii). Position (iii) brutally posits micro experiential properties that are the properties of ultimates. These properties are not like the macro experiential properties that we know of but, in some unknown way, the macro experiential properties we do know emerge from them.

In short, Strawson's position has the advantage that it:

recommends a general framework of thought in which there need be no more sense of a radically unintelligible transition in the case of

experientiality that there is in the case of liquidity. (Strawson, 2006, p. 21)

Yet, it has a great number of disadvantages. Other mysteries or problematic features of the account that are just as great, if not greater, replace the mystery that is solved:

- (1) There are a large number of subjects of experience and these include the fundamental particles.
- (2) If fundamental particles are the subjects of experience then is anything composed from them such a subject? If not, what is the principle that makes creatures like us such subjects (at least during our wakeful and dreaming periods), and other conglomerations not?
- (3) The position says little about how macro experience (and different types of such experience) arises from micro experience, other than that it emerges in a wholly dependent way.
- (4) Do the fundamental micro experiential properties have independent causal powers? Do they abide by laws? If they interact can they do so with non-experiential properties too?

Strawson explicitly mentions some of these problems for his account, yet I think he fails to make a fair assessment of his position relative to the others that I have outlined here. In my view, his position is worse off than the other forms of dualism I outlined and it is nearly every bit as problematic as physicalism.

#### 4. Conclusion

Strawson articulates a view on the mind-body problem that goes against the mainstream physicalist view held by many today. I think that he is right to bring it to our attention. If, as I believe, mainstream physicalism is problematic, then more attention ought to be given to spelling out alternatives in order to assess them for plausibility.

In the first part of this paper I argued that, despite Strawson's claims to the contrary, his position is in fact one version of substance monism together with property dualism. In the second part of this paper, I argued that by looking at the assumptions that Strawson makes when arguing for his position and by looking at the problems of such a position we can see that his variety of dualism is no better off than other varieties, and seems indeed to have more explanatory work to do. I also claimed that Strawson is right to point out that mainstream physicalism is not, at least as we understand it at present, a good solution to the mind-body problem. There is an explanatory gap that has

not been crossed. However, Strawson's position brutally posits experiential properties that are unlike ours, but from which ours emerge. This position also has an explanatory gap that, while not as wide as that which the physicalists posit, nonetheless has, at one side of the gulf, brute unfamiliar experiential properties.<sup>25</sup>

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